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How ex-spy's revelations compound Is

Further fallout expected from sensational (though still unproved) allegations

By Jeff McConnell

Before the recent publication of a memoir of his service for the Mossad, the Israeli spy service, Victor Ostrovsky believed his road to credibility would be a rough one. Who would believe his story? How could he prove that he had even been employed by the spy agency, much less that his sensational allegations of assassination, blackmail and Israeli interference in other countries were true?

As it turned out, much of the work would soon be done for him by Israel itself. Lawyers for the Israeli government tried, through American and Canadian courts, to stop the publication of Ostrovsky's book, "By Way of Deception." Although judges in both countries blocked publication, their injunctions were quickly overturned. Still, the publicity created by the extraordinary Israeli efforts and by the highly unusual judicial decisions gained Ostrovsky the acceptance he had sought. It also propelled the book to The New York Times best-seller list, where it remained for a full three months.

Difficult times for Israel

These have been hard times internationally for Israel. Even as Ostrovsky's damning expose has become a cause celebre, the country continues to reel from worldwide condemnation of the killings by Israeli border police of at least 18 Palestinians at Jerusalem's Temple Mount. Relations with the United States have suffered over American support for resolutions by the United Nations Security Council calling for a UN investigation of the incident, condemning Israel for refusing to cooperate and, most recently, on Dec. 20, authorizing UN monitoring of the safety of Palestinians in areas occupied by Israel. Already, there were tensions between the two countries over American opposition to Israeli talk of settling recent throngs of Soviet emigrants in the occupied territories.

Further fallout from Ostrovsky's book could hurt Israel more. Last month, a French edition was published, and there will

surely be more impact as new translations appear. Investigators in Denmark and Sri Lanka, two countries to which Ostrovsky was assigned while with the Mossad, have launched inquiries into his allegations of Israeli interference in their internal affairs, and other countries may follow. If the United States is one, there could be a revival of spy scandals that seriously damaged US relations with Israel in the mid-1980s.

In Denmark, the Mossad had a relationship with the Danish security service, Ostrovsky wrote, "so intimate as to be indecent." He alleged that a Mossad officer sits in the Danish service's headquarters "monitoring all Arabic and Palestinian-related messages coming into their listening department.... As the only Arabic-speaking man there, he understands the messages, but sends the tapes to Israel for translation." According to Ostrovsky, the information is not shared with Denmark, which only receives heavily edited transcripts. At the same time, he alleged, Mossad carries out its own apparently illegal telephone tapping through listening devices installed by the Danes.

Shortly after the book's publication, the parliamentary committee overseeing the Danish spy service summoned its chief and the Danish justice minister for explanations. Following that session, the ruling coalition responded that there was no need for further inquiry, but some committee members are unsatisfied and more actions are expected.

Sri Lanka investigation

In Sri Lanka, the president has appointed the solicitor general, F. W. B. Wadugodapitiya, as a one-man commission of inquiry into Ostrovsky's allegations of improper Mossad conduct there. According to Ostrovsky's book, the Mossad trained and supplied both the Sri Lankan military and anti-government Tamil rebels. He also alleged that to assist Sri Lanka with arms purchases, the Mossad, during the 1970s, "dreamed up" a massive hydroelectric project for the Sri Lankan government and arranged for Israeli academics to write favor-



Victor Ostrovsky

Mossad agents in the United States, he writes, are "actively spying, recruiting, organizing and carrying out covert activities - mainly in New York and Washington, which they refer to as their 'playground.'"

able reports to deceive the World Bank into financing it.

Last month, the solicitor visited Ostrovsky's home near Ottawa and took a sworn deposition, according to Osoka Weerasinghe, a spokesman for the Sri Lankan embassy in Canada.

In the United States, an FBI spokesperson said that the agency is not currently investigating Ostrovsky's allegations of Mossad misconduct here but left open the possi-

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bility for the future. Ostrovsky wrote that Mossad agents "actively spying, recruiting, organizing and carrying out covert activities - mainly in New York and Washington, which they refer to as their 'playground' - belong to a special, super-secret division of the Mossad called simply 'Al,' Hebrew for 'above' or 'on top.'"

"The unit is so secretive, and so separate from the main organization, that the majority of Mossad employees don't even know what it does and do not have access to its files on the computer."

According to Ostrovsky, Mossad agents work here under the cover of operating businesses. One of those businesses, he alleged, was an escort service. He outlined several other clandestine schemes, and his revelations could potentially interest criminal investigators. One he described as an effort by Al "in New York and Washington to undermine Arab determination to enlist U.S. assistance in helping the PLO - or Palestinians generally - achieve a higher status through the U.N." This effort, he wrote, employed illegal wiretapping and was partly responsible for Andrew Young's 1979 dismissal as US ambassador to the United Nations for meeting with PLO representatives.

Another effort allegedly came to light as the result of the recent Ill Wind investigation into Pentagon procurement fraud. Ostrovsky said in his book that Al was deeply involved but that FBI investigators uncovered only part of a larger Mossad plot. In September, William M. Galvin, a Washington defense consultant, was fined and sentenced to prison for bribing a Navy official to help an Israeli company, Mazlat, to secure a contract to build a reconnaissance drone for the US military.

Ostrovsky alleged that the bribes were part of a larger scheme, in which Al stole the research for the drone from major US aircraft-manufacturing firms. "Israel had been working on a drone, but was not nearly far enough advanced to enter this competition," Ostrovsky wrote.

In the mid-1980s, US-Israeli relations were shaken by two spy scandals. In November 1985, a Navy civilian analyst, Jona-

than Pollard, was arrested for spying for Israel. He is currently serving a life sentence. A year later, the Iran-contra affair was exposed, and Israeli agents were shown to have a major role. Both episodes caused disruptions in US-Israeli relations, and a new probe of Ostrovsky's allegations could do the same.

One government that has expressed no interest in setting up an independent probe of his allegations is that of Israel itself. Still, the Israeli press has been filled with anonymous leaks about Ostrovsky's character and the credibility of his charges, according to Yossi Melman, an Israeli journalist and co-author of another best-selling book on Israeli intelligence, "Every Spy a Prince." Melman himself is not a believer; he called the Al unit "pure imagination," disputed Ostrovsky's allegations of Mossad misconduct toward Denmark and Sri Lanka and insisted that his book is a product of revenge for being dropped from the service.

"Ninety percent of his claims are not true," Melman insisted in an interview during a recent visit to Boston. "This man is a master of disinformation."

The Israeli Labor opposition has so far observed the taboo on discussing the Mossad's operations publicly as strictly as has the right-wing government. A Knesset inquiry was limited to questions of why the agency hired Ostrovsky and why it risked publicizing the book by trying to suppress it. This is likely to change only if US-Israeli relations are complicated by an FBI probe.

Meanwhile, Ostrovsky has tried to maintain a normal life, he said in a recent interview. The police guard he had for the first day of the affair has left, but he said his concerns about direct Mossad retaliation have eased. He claimed to have heard from two sources that Mossad officials initially entertained a plan to kidnap him and return him to Israel but dropped it, a story Melman said he was told authoritatively.

Ostrovsky is convinced that Israel's failed attempts to suppress his book made kidnapping impossible. "They rethought it in light of the publicity," he said.

Jeff McConnell teaches at Tufts University.

2 Israel ex-officers tied to cartel death squads

By Douglas Farah
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE

BOGOTA — Two senior retired Israeli military officers conspired with top-level Caribbean officials to arm and train assassins of the Medellin cocaine cartel on the island of Antigua, according to a British judicial inquiry.

It was the first investigation to tie together evidence from Antigua, Israel and Colombia on how a shipment of 500 automatic weapons and 200,000 rounds of ammunition, reportedly ordered by Antigua from Israel in 1988, ended up in the hands of one of Colombia's most violent drug barons, Jose Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha, who is reputed to be anti-Semitic.

The Judicial Commission of Inquiry in Antigua, which had requested the aid of the British government in investigating the affair, concluded that the two Israelis were engaged in a "wicked enterprise" to set up a training school in Antigua for paid Medellin cartel killers, with weapons to be provided unwittingly by the Israeli government.

The 300-page report was written by Louis Blom-Cooper, a British lawyer. It is scheduled to be made public on Dec. 15.

Part of the lot of 400 Galil assault rifles and 100 Uzi machine guns were found on a farm belonging to Rodriguez Gacha last January.

The report said three Israelis were key to the plot: retired Lt. Col.



YAIR KLEIN
Ex-officer headed firm

Yair Klein, a counterterrorism specialist and president of Spearhead Ltd., a private security firm; retired Brig. Gen. Pinchas Shachar, an agent for Israel Military Industries, the Israeli government arms manufacturer; and Maurice Sarfati, an Israeli melon farmer based in Antigua with close ties to Antiguan officials.

Klein was convicted last Friday in Israel of three counts of illegally exporting weapons and military expertise. He faces a maximum of three years in prison.

He has admitted to working in Colombia, but says he was training ranchers to defend themselves from Marxist guerrillas. Shachar, who denied doing anything illegal, now lives in Israel and faces no criminal charges. Sarfati is believed to be hiding in Paris.

"This conspiracy was, in my judgement, hatched in Miami and developed from that city," the report said. "Its epicenter is undoubtedly among a group of expatriate Israelis living in that city — Sarfati, Gen. Shachar . . . and the visiting Col. Klein."

Blom-Cooper said that while Israel Military Industries was "guilty of negligence" in processing the order for the weapons, "neither the government nor its defense ministry had the faintest notion the consignment of arms and ammunition was destined for Colombia, let alone the Colombian drug cartels."

The report says Vere Bird Jr., son of Antiguan Prime Minister Vere Bird Sr. who is a former Cabinet minister; and Col. Clyde Walker, commander of the Antigua and Barbuda Defense Force, were the Antiguan responsible for collaborating with the scheme.

As portrayed in the Blom-Cooper report, the affair began in September 1988, when Sarfati, with a failing melon business and \$8 million in debts in Antigua, passed on to authorities a proposal of Klein's Spearhead Ltd. for a security training school on the island.

"To anyone with the slightest knowledge of armed forces it was obvious that the training school proffered by Spearhead Ltd. was intended . . . to train mercenaries in assault techniques and assassination," the report says.

In October 1988, Walker made a

one-day trip to Miami. Shachar, an agent for Israel Military Industries, says he met with Walker then to discuss the arms deal, although Walker said he was shopping.

Shachar sent a fax to Israel Military Industries seeking prices for Uzi and Galil rifles, and on Oct. 23 the firm quoted its prices for the munitions "for the Antiguan army."

Klein, who was allegedly already engaged in training Colombians tied to Rodriguez Gacha, along with Shachar and a third Israeli visited Antigua from Nov. 16 to 19.

Blom-Cooper says the three visitors, along with Sarfati, Walker, and Bird Jr., spent those three days "occupied in deadly serious talks about a military training school for which a consignment of guns and ammunition had been ordered by IMI."

Shachar said he withdrew in November 1988, but Blom-Cooper said that the money trail for the arms led directly to him, and that he used his personal bank account to transfer money from the group financing the deal to Israel Military Industries.

Shachar said the money came from Antigua, but there are no records of the government of Antigua making the payments.

The guns were shipped from Haifa on the Elise on March 29, 1989. On April 10, when stories about Klein began to appear in the Colombia press, the report says Klein, Shachar and Dror again arrived in Antigua.

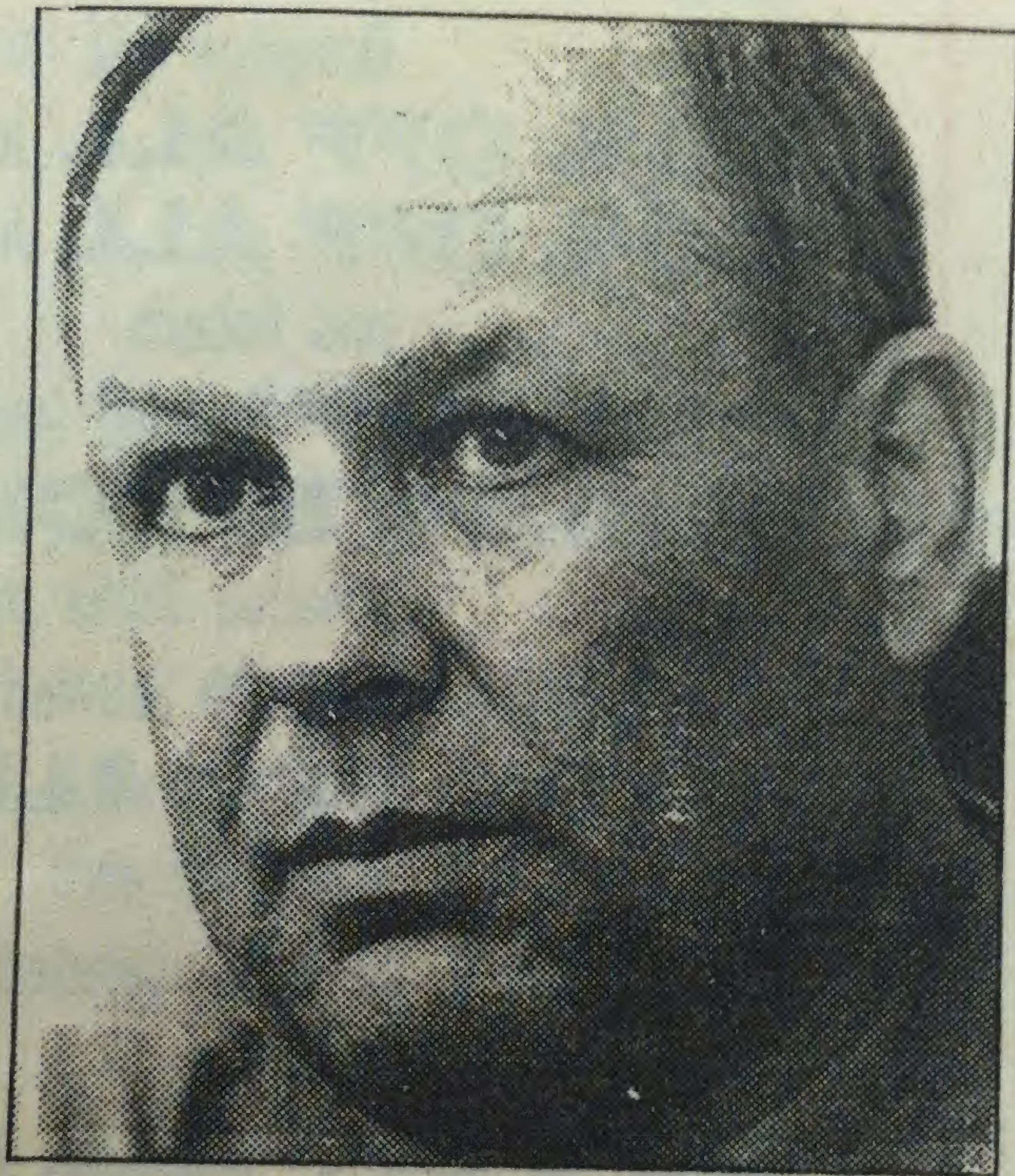
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